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THE INFLUENCE OF DARWINISM ON THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS

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THE title of my paper might well have been "the creation by Darwinism of the scientific study of Religions," but that I feared to mar my tribute to a great name by any shadow of exaggeration. Before the publication of *The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*, even in the eighteenth century, isolated thinkers, notably Hume and Herder, had conjectured that the orthodox beliefs of their own day were developments from the cruder superstitions of the past. These were however only particular speculations of individual sceptics. Religion was not yet generally regarded as a proper subject for scientific study, with facts to be collected and theories to be deduced. A Congress of Religions such as that recently held at Oxford would have savoured of impiety.

In the brief space allotted me I can attempt only two things; first, and very briefly, I shall try to indicate the normal attitude towards religion in the early part of the last century; second, and in more detail, I shall try to make clear what is the outlook of advanced thinkers to-day¹. From this second inquiry it will, I hope, be abundantly manifest that it is the doctrine of evolution that has made this outlook possible and even necessary.

The ultimate and unchallenged presupposition of the old view was that religion was a *doctrine*, a body of supposed truths. It was in fact what we should now call Theology, and what the ancients called Mythology. Ritual was scarcely considered at all, and, when considered, it was held to be a form in which beliefs, already defined and fixed as dogma, found a natural mode of expression. This, it

¹ To be accurate I ought to add "in Europe." I advisedly omit from consideration the whole immense field of Oriental mysticism, because it has remained practically untouched by the influence of Darwinism.

will be later shown, is a profound error or rather a most misleading half-truth. Creeds, doctrines, theology and the like are only a part, and at first the least important part, of religion.

Further, and the fact is important, this *dogma*, thus supposed to be the essential content of the "true" religion, was a teleological scheme complete and unalterable, which had been revealed to man once and for all by a highly anthropomorphic God, whose existence was assumed. The duty of man towards this revelation was to accept its doctrines and obey its precepts. The notion that this revelation had grown bit by bit out of man's consciousness and that his business was to better it would have seemed rank blasphemy. Religion, so conceived, left no place for development. "The Truth" might be learnt, but never critically examined; being thus avowedly complete and final, it was doomed to stagnation.

The details of this supposed revelation seem almost too naïve for enumeration. As Hume observed, "popular theology has a positive appetite for absurdity." It is sufficient to recall that "revelation" included such items as the Creation¹ of the world out of nothing in six days; the making of Eve from one of Adam's ribs; the Temptation by a talking snake; the confusion of tongues at the tower of Babel; the doctrine of Original Sin; a scheme of salvation which demanded the Virgin Birth, Vicarious Atonement, and the Resurrection of the material body. The scheme was unfolded in an infallible Book, or, for one section of Christians, guarded by the tradition of an infallible Church, and on the acceptance or refusal of this scheme depended an eternity of weal or woe. There is not one of these doctrines that has not now been recast, softened down, mysticised, allegorised into something more conformable with modern thinking. It is hard for the present generation, unless their breeding has been singularly archaic, to realise that these amazing doctrines were literally held and believed to constitute the very essence of religion; to doubt them was a moral delinquency.

It had not, however, escaped the notice of travellers and missionaries that savages carried on some sort of practices that seemed to be religious, and believed in some sort of spirits or demons. Hence, beyond the confines illuminated by revealed truth, a vague region was assigned to *Natural Religion*. The original revelation had been kept intact only by one chosen people, the Jews, by them to be handed on to Christianity. Outside the borders of this Goshen the world had sunk into the darkness of Egypt. Where analogies between savage cults and the Christian religions were observed, they were explained as degradations; the heathen had somehow wilfully "lost the light."

¹ It is interesting to note that the very word "Creator" has nowadays almost passed into the region of mythology. Instead we have *L'Évolution Créatrice*.

Our business was not to study but, exclusively, to convert them, to root out superstition and carry the torch of revelation to "Souls in heathen darkness lying." To us nowadays it is a commonplace of anthropological research that we must seek for the beginnings of religion in the religions of primitive peoples, but in the last century the orthodox mind was convinced that it possessed a complete and luminous ready-made revelation; the study of what was held to be a mere degradation seemed idle and superfluous.

But, it may be asked, if, to the orthodox, revealed religion was sacrosanct and savage religion a thing beneath consideration, why did not the sceptics show a more liberal spirit, and pursue to their logical issue the conjectures they had individually hazarded? The reason is simple and significant. The sceptics too had not worked free from the presupposition that the essence of religion is dogma. Their intellectualism, expressive of the whole eighteenth century, was probably in England strengthened by the Protestant doctrine of an infallible Book. Hume undoubtedly confused religion with dogmatic theology. The attention of orthodox and sceptics alike was focussed on the truth or falsity of certain propositions. Only a few minds of rare quality were able dimly to conceive that religion might be a necessary step in the evolution of human thought.

It is not a little interesting to note that Darwin, who was leader and intellectual king of his generation, was also in this matter to some extent its child. His attitude towards religion is stated clearly, in Chap. VIII of the *Life and Letters*¹. On board the *Beagle* he was simply orthodox and was laughed at by several of the officers for quoting the Bible as an unanswerable authority on some point of morality. By 1839 he had come to see that the Old Testament was no more to be trusted than the sacred books of the Hindoos. Next went the belief in miracles, and next Paley's "argument from design" broke down before the law of natural selection; the suffering so manifest in nature is seen to be compatible rather with Natural Selection than with the goodness and omnipotence of God. Darwin felt to the full all the ignorance that lay hidden under specious phrases like "the plan of creation" and "Unity of design." Finally, he tells us "the mystery of the beginning of all things is insoluble by us; and I for one must be content to remain an Agnostic."

The word Agnostic is significant not only of the humility of the man himself but also of the attitude of his age. Religion, it is clear, is still conceived as something to be *known*, a matter of true or false *opinion*. Orthodox religion was to Darwin a series of erroneous hypotheses to be bit by bit discarded when shown to be untenable.

¹ Vol. I. p. 304. For Darwin's religious views see also *Descent of Man*, 1871, Vol. I. p. 65; 2nd edit. Vol. I. p. 142.

The *acts* of religion which may result from such convictions, i.e. devotion in all its forms, prayer, praise, sacraments, are left unmentioned. It is clear that they are not, as now to us, sociological survivals of great interest and importance, but rather matters too private, too personal, for discussion.

Huxley, writing in the *Contemporary Review*¹, says, "In a dozen years *The Origin of Species* has worked as complete a revolution in biological science as the *Principia* did in astronomy." It has done so because, in the words of Helmholtz, it contained "an essentially new creative thought," that of the continuity of life, the absence of breaks. In the two most conservative subjects, Religion and Classics, this creative ferment was slow indeed to work. Darwin himself felt strongly "that a man should not publish on a subject to which he has not given special and continuous thought," and hence wrote little on religion and with manifest reluctance, though, as already seen, in answer to pertinacious inquiry he gave an outline of his own views. But none the less he foresaw that his doctrine must have, for the history of man's mental evolution, issues wider than those with which he was prepared personally to deal. He writes, in *The Origin of Species*², "In the future I see open fields for far more important researches. Psychology will be securely based on the foundation already well laid by Mr Herbert Spencer, that of the necessary acquirement of each mental power and capacity by gradation."

Nowhere, it is true, does Darwin definitely say that he regarded religion as a set of phenomena, the development of which may be studied from the psychological standpoint. Rather we infer from his *piety*—in the beautiful Roman sense—towards tradition and association, that religion was to him in some way sacrosanct. But it is delightful to see how his heart went out towards the new method in religious study which he had himself, if half-unconsciously, inaugurated. Writing in 1871 to Dr Tylor, on the publication of his *Primitive Culture*, he says³, "It is wonderful how you trace animism from the lower races up the religious belief of the highest races. It will make me for the future look at religion—a belief in the soul, etc.—from a new point of view."

Psychology was henceforth to be based on "the necessary acquirement of each mental capacity by gradation." With these memorable words the door closes on the old and opens on the new horizon. The mental focus henceforth is not on the maintaining or refuting of an orthodoxy but on the genesis and evolution of a capacity, not on perfection but on process. Continuous evolution leaves no gap for revelation sudden and complete. We have henceforth to ask, not

¹ 1871.

² 6th edition, p. 428.

³ *Life and Letters*, Vol. III. p. 151.

when was religion revealed or what was the revelation, but how did religious phenomena arise and develop. For an answer to this we turn with new and reverent eyes to study "the heathen in his blindness" and the child "born in sin." We still indeed send out missionaries to convert the heathen, but here at least in Cambridge before they start they attend lectures on anthropology and comparative religion. The "decadence" theory is dead and should be buried.

The study of primitive religions then has been made possible and even inevitable by the theory of Evolution. We have now to ask what new facts and theories have resulted from that study. This brings us to our second point, the advanced outlook on religion to-day.

The view I am about to state is no mere personal opinion of my own. To my present standpoint I have been led by the investigations of such masters as Drs Wundt, Lehmann, Preuss, Bergsen, Beck and in our own country Drs Tylor and Frazer¹.

Religion always contains two factors. First, a theoretical factor, what a man *thinks* about the unseen—his theology, or, if we prefer so to call it, his mythology. Second, what he *does* in relation to this unseen—his ritual. These factors rarely if ever occur in complete separation; they are blended in very varying proportions. Religion we have seen was in the last century regarded mainly in its theoretical aspect as a doctrine. Greek religion for example meant to most educated persons Greek mythology. Yet even a cursory examination shows that neither Greek nor Roman had any creed or dogma, any hard and fast formulation of belief. In the Greek Mysteries² only we find what we should call a *Confiteor*; and this is not a confession of faith, but an avowal of rites performed. When the religion of primitive peoples came to be examined it was speedily seen that though vague beliefs necessarily abound, definite creeds are practically non-existent. Ritual is dominant and imperative.

This predominance and priority of ritual over definite creed was first forced upon our notice by the study of savages, but it promptly and happily joined hands with modern psychology. Popular belief says, I think, therefore I act; modern scientific psychology says,

¹ I can only name here the books that have specially influenced my own views. They are W. Wundt, *Völkerpsychologie*, Leipzig, 1900. P. Beck, "Die Nachahmung," Leipzig, 1904, and "Erkenntnisstheorie des primitiven Denkens" in *Zeitschrift f. Philos. und Philos. Kritik*, 1903, p. 172, and 1904, p. 9. Henri Bergson, *L'Évolution Créatrice* and *Matière et Mémoire*, 1908. K. Th. Preuss, various articles published in the *Globus* (see p. 507, note 1), and in the *Archiv f. Religionswissenschaft*, and for the subject of magic, MM. Hubert et Mauss, "Théorie générale de la Magie," in *L'Année Sociologique*, vii.

² See my *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, p. 155, Cambridge, 1908.

I act (or rather, react to outside stimulus), and so I come to think. Thus there is set going a recurrent series: act and thought become in their turn stimuli to fresh acts and thoughts. In examining religion as envisaged to-day it would therefore be more correct to begin with the practice of religion, i.e. ritual, and then pass to its theory, theology or mythology. But it will be more convenient to adopt the reverse method. The theoretical content of religion is to those of us who are Protestants far more familiar and we shall thus proceed from the known to the comparatively unknown.

I shall avoid all attempt at rigid definition. The problem before the modern investigator is, not to determine the essence and definition of religion but to inquire how religious phenomena, religious ideas and practices arose. Now the theoretical content of religion, the domain of theology or mythology, is broadly familiar to all. It is the world of the unseen, the supersensuous; it is the world of what we call the soul and the supposed objects of the soul's perception, sprites, demons, ghosts and gods. How did this world grow up?

We turn to our savages. Intelligent missionaries of bygone days used to ply savages with questions such as these: Had they any belief in God? Did they believe in the immortality of the soul? Taking their own clear-cut conceptions, discriminated by a developed terminology, these missionaries tried to translate them into languages that had neither the words nor the thoughts, only a vague, inchoate, tangled substratum, out of which these thoughts and words later differentiated themselves. Let us examine this substratum.

Nowadays we popularly distinguish between objective and subjective; and further, we regard the two worlds as in some sense opposed. To the objective world we commonly attribute some reality independent of consciousness, while we think of the subjective as dependent for its existence on the mind. The objective world consists of perceptible things, or of the ultimate constituents to which matter is reduced by physical speculation. The subjective world is the world of beliefs, hallucinations, dreams, abstract ideas, imaginations and the like. Psychology of course knows that the objective and subjective worlds are interdependent, inextricably intertwined, but for practical purposes the distinction is convenient.

But primitive man has not yet drawn the distinction between objective and subjective. Nay, more, it is foreign to almost the whole of ancient philosophy. Plato's Ideas¹, his Goodness, Truth, Beauty, his class-names, horse, table, are it is true dematerialised as far as possible, but they have outside existence, apart from the

¹ I owe this psychological analysis of the elements of the primitive supersensuous world mainly to Dr Beck, "*Erkenntnistheorie des primitiven Denkens*," see p. 498, note 1.

mind of the thinker, they have in some shadowy way spatial extension. Yet ancient philosophies and primitive man alike needed and possessed for practical purposes a distinction which served as well as our subjective and objective. To the primitive savage all his thoughts, every object of which he was conscious, whether by perception or conception, had reality, that is, it had existence outside himself, but it might have reality of various kinds or different degrees.

It is not hard to see how this would happen. A man's senses may mislead him. He sees the reflection of a bird in a pond. To his eyes it is a real bird. He touches it, *he puts it to the touch*, and to his touch it is not a bird at all. It is real then, but surely not quite so real as a bird that you can touch. Again, he sees smoke. It is real to his eyes. He tries to grasp it, it vanishes. The wind touches him, but he cannot see it, which makes him feel uncanny. The most real thing is that which affects most senses and especially what affects the sense of touch. Apparently touch is the deepest down, most primitive, of senses. The rest are specialisations and complications. Primitive man has no formal rubric "optical delusion," but he learns practically to distinguish between things that affect only one sense and things that affect two or more—if he did not he would not survive. But both classes of things are real to him. *Percipi est esse.*

So far, primitive man has made a real observation; there are things that appeal to one sense only. But very soon creeps in confusion fraught with disaster. He passes naturally enough, being economical of any mental effort, from what he really sees but cannot feel to what he thinks he sees, and gives to it the same secondary reality. He has dreams, visions, hallucinations, nightmares. He dreams that an enemy is beating him, and he wakes rubbing his head. Then further he remembers things; that is, for him, he sees them. A great chief died the other day and they buried him, but he sees him still in his mind, sees him in his war-paint, splendid, victorious. So the image of the past goes together with his dreams and visions to the making of this other less real, but still real world, his other-world of the supersensuous, the supernatural, a world, the outside existence of which, independent of himself, he never questions.

And, naturally enough, the future joins the past in this supersensuous world. He can hope, he can imagine, he can prophesy. And again the images of his hope are real; he sees them with that mind's eye which as yet he has not distinguished from his bodily eye. And so the supersensuous world grows and grows big with the invisible present, and big also with the past and the future, crowded with the ghosts of the dead and shadowed with oracles and portents. It is this supersensuous, supernatural world which is the eternity, the

other-world, of primitive religion, not an endlessness of time, but a state removed from full sensuous reality, a world in which anything and everything may happen, a world peopled by demonic ancestors and liable to a splendid vagueness, to a "once upon a time-ness" denied to the present. It not unfrequently happens that people who know that the world nowadays obeys fixed laws have no difficulty in believing that six thousand years ago man was made direct from a lump of clay, and woman was made from one of man's superfluous ribs.

The fashioning of the supersensuous world comes out very clearly in primitive man's views about the soul and life after death. Herbert Spencer noted long ago the influence of dreams in forming a belief in immortality, but being very rational himself, he extended to primitive man a quite alien quality of rationality. Herbert Spencer argued that when a savage has a dream he seeks to account for it, and in so doing invents a spirit world. The mistake here lies in the "seeks to account for it¹." Man is at first too busy *living* to have any time for disinterested *thinking*. He dreams a dream and it is real for him. He does not seek to account for it any more than for his hands and feet. He cannot distinguish between a *conception* and a *perception*, that is all. He remembers his ancestors or they appear to him in a dream; therefore they are alive still, but only as a rule to about the third generation. Then he remembers them no more and they cease to be.

Next as regards his own soul. He feels something within him, his life-power, his will to live, his power to act, his personality—whatever we like to call it. He cannot touch this thing that is himself, but it is real. His friend too is alive and one day he is dead; he cannot move, he cannot act. Well, something has gone that was his friend's self. He has stopped breathing. Was it his breath? or he is bleeding; is it his blood? This life-power is something; does it live in his heart or his lungs or his midriff? He did not see it go; perhaps it is like wind, an *anima*, a *Geist*, a ghost. But again it comes back in a dream, only looking shadowy; it is not the man's life, it is a thin copy of the man; it is an "image" (*eidolon*). It is like that shifting distorted thing that dogs the living man's footsteps in the sunshine; it is a "shade" (*skia*)².

¹ Primitive man, as Dr Beck observes, is not impelled by an *Erkenntnisstrieb*. Dr Beck says he has counted upwards of 80 of these mythological *Triebe* (*tendencies*) with which primitive man has been endowed.

² The two conceptions of the soul, as a life-essence, inseparable from the body, and as a separable phantom seem to occur in most primitive systems. They are distinct conceptions but are inextricably blended in savage thought. The two notions *Körperseele* and *Psyche* have been very fully discussed in Wundt's *Völkerpsychologie*, II. pp. 1—142, Leipzig, 1900.

Ghosts and sprites, ancestor worship, the soul, oracles, prophecy; all these elements of the primitive supersensuous world we willingly admit to be the proper material of religion; but other elements are more surprising; such are class-names, abstract ideas, numbers, geometrical figures. We do not nowadays think of these as of religious content, but to primitive men they were all part of the furniture of his supernatural world.

With respect to class-names, Dr Tylor¹ has shown how instructive are the first attempts of the savage to get at the idea of a class. Things in which similarity is observed, things indeed which can be related at all are to the savage *kindred*. A species is a family or a number of individuals with a common god to look after them. Such for example is the Finn doctrine of the *haltia*. Every object has its *haltia*, but the *haltiat* were not tied to the individual, they interested themselves in every member of the species. Each stone had its *haltia*, but that *haltia* was interested in other stones; the individuals disappeared, the *haltia* remained.

Nor was it only class-names that belonged to the supersensuous world. A man's own proper-name is a sort of spiritual essence of him, a kind of soul to be carefully concealed. By pronouncing a name you bring the thing itself into being. When Elohim would create Day "he called out to the Light 'Day,' and to the Darkness he called out 'Night'"; the great magician pronounced the magic Names and the Things came into being. "In the beginning was the Word" is literally true, and this reflects the fact that our *conceptual* world comes into being by the mental process of naming². In old times people went further; they thought that by naming events they could bring them to be, and custom even to-day keeps up the inveterate magical habit of wishing people "Good Morning" and a "Happy Christmas."

Number, too, is part of the supersensuous world that is thoroughly religious. We can see and touch seven apples, but seven itself, that wonderful thing that shifts from object to object, giving it its *sevenness*, that living thing, for it begets itself anew in multiplication—surely seven is a fit denizen of the upper-world. Originally all numbers dwelt there, and a certain supersensuous sanctity still clings to seven and three. We still say "Holy, Holy, Holy," and in some mystic way feel the holier.

The soul and the supersensuous world get thinner and thinner, rarer and more rarefied, but they always trail behind them clouds of smoke and vapour from the world of sense and space whence they have come. It is difficult for us even nowadays to use the word

¹ *Primitive Culture*, Vol. II. p. 245 (4th edit.), 1903.

² For a full discussion of this point see Beck, *Nachahmung*, p. 41, *Die Sprache*.

"soul" without lapsing into a sensuous mythology. The Cartesians' sharp distinction between *res extensa non cogitans* and *res cogitans non extensa* is remote.

So far then man, through the processes of his thinking, has provided himself with a supersensuous world, the world of sense-delusion, of smoke and cloud, of dream and phantom, of imagination, of name and number and image. The natural course would now seem to be that this supersensuous world should develop into the religious world as we know it, that out of a vague animism with ghosts of ancestors, demons, and the like, there should develop in due order momentary gods (*Augenblicks-Götter*), tribal gods, polytheism, and finally a pure monotheism.

This course of development is usually assumed, but it is not I think quite what really happens. The supersensuous world as we have got it so far is too theoretic to be complete material of religion. It is indeed only one factor, or rather it is as it were a lifeless body that waits for a living spirit to possess and inform it. Had the theoretic factor remained uninformed it would eventually have separated off into its constituent elements of error and truth, the error dying down as a belated metaphysic, the truth developing into a correct and scientific psychology of the subjective. But man has ritual as well as mythology; that is, he feels and acts as well as thinks; nay more he probably feels and acts long before he definitely thinks. This contradicts all our preconceived notions of theology. Man, we imagine, believes in a god or gods and then worships. The real order seems to be that, in a sense presently to be explained, he worships, he feels and acts, and out of his feeling and action, projected into his confused thinking, he develops a god. We pass therefore to our second factor in religion :—ritual.

The word "ritual" brings to our modern minds the notion of a church with a priesthood and organised services. Instinctively we think of a congregation meeting to confess sins, to receive absolution, to pray, to praise, to listen to sermons, and possibly to partake of sacraments. Were we to examine these fully developed phenomena we should hardly get further in the analysis of our religious conceptions than the notion of a highly anthropomorphic god approached by purely human methods of personal entreaty and adulation.

Further, when we first come to the study of primitive religions we expect *a priori* to find the same elements, though in a ruder form. We expect to see "The heathen in his blindness bow down to wood and stone," but the facts that actually confront us are startlingly dissimilar. Bowing down to wood and stone is an occu-

pation that exists mainly in the minds of hymn-writers. The real savage is more actively engaged. Instead of asking a god to do what he wants done, he does it or tries to do it himself; instead of prayers he utters spells. In a word he is busy practising magic, and above all he is strenuously engaged in dancing magical dances. When the savage wants rain or wind or sunshine, he does not go to church; he summons his tribe and they dance a rain-dance or wind-dance or sun-dance. When a savage goes to war we must not picture his wife on her knees at home praying for the absent; instead we must picture her dancing the whole night long; not for mere joy of heart or to pass the weary hours; she is dancing his war-dance to bring him victory.

Magic is nowadays condemned alike by science and by religion; it is both useless and impious. It is obsolete, and only practised by malign sorcerers in obscure holes and corners. Undoubtedly magic is neither religion nor science, but in all probability it is the spiritual protoplasm from which religion and science ultimately differentiated. As such the doctrine of evolution bids us scan it closely. Magic may be malign and private; nowadays it is apt to be both. But in early days magic was as much for good as for evil; it was publicly practised for the common weal.

The gist of magic comes out most clearly in magical dances. We think of dancing as a light form of recreation, practised by the young from sheer *joie de vivre* and unsuitable for the mature. But among the Tarahumares¹ in Mexico the word for dancing, *nolávoa*, means "to work." Old men will reproach young men saying "Why do you not go to work?" meaning why do you not dance instead of only looking on. The chief religious sin of which the Tarahumare is conscious is that he has not danced enough and not made enough *tesvino*, his cereal intoxicant.

Dancing then is to the savage *working, doing*, and the dance is in its origin an imitation or perhaps rather an intensification of processes of work². Repetition, regular and frequent, constitutes rhythm and rhythm heightens the sense of will power in action. Rhythmical action may even, as seen in the dances of Dervishes, produce a condition of ecstasy. Ecstasy among primitive peoples is a condition much valued; it is often, though not always, enhanced by the use of intoxicants. Psychologically the savage starts from the sense of his own will power, he stimulates it by every means at his command. Feeling his will strongly and knowing nothing of natural law he recognises no limits to his own power; he feels himself a

¹ Carl Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico*, p. 830, London, 1908.

² Karl Bücher, *Arbeit und Rhythmus*, Leipzig (3rd edit.), 1902, *passim*.

magician, a god; he does not pray, he *wills*. Moreover he wills collectively¹, reinforced by the will and action of his whole tribe. Truly of him it may be said, "La vie déborde l'intelligence, l'intelligence c'est un retrécissement²."

The magical extension and heightening of personality come out very clearly in what are rather unfortunately known as *mimetic* dances. Animal dances occur very frequently among primitive peoples. The dancers dress up as birds, beasts, or fishes, and reproduce the characteristic movements and habits of the animals impersonated. So characteristic is this impersonation in magical dancing that among the Mexicans the word for magic, *navali*, means "disguise³." A very common animal dance is the frog-dance. When it rains the frogs croak. If you desire rain you dress up like a frog and croak and jump. We think of such a performance as a conscious imitation. The man, we think, is more or less *like* a frog. That is not how primitive man thinks; indeed, he scarcely thinks at all; what *he* wants done the frog can do by croaking and jumping, so he croaks and jumps and, for all he can, *becomes* a frog. "L'intelligence animale joue sans doute les représentations plutôt qu'elle ne les pense⁴."

We shall best understand this primitive state of mind if we study the child "born in sin." If a child is "playing at lions" he does not *imitate* a lion, i.e. he does not consciously try to be a thing more or less like a lion, he *becomes* one. His reaction, his terror, is the same as if a real lion were there. It is this childlike power of utter impersonation, of *being* the thing we act or even see acted, this extension and intensification of our own personality that lives deep down in all of us and is the very seat and secret of our joy in the drama.

A child's mind is indeed throughout the best clue to the understanding of savage magic. A young and vital child knows no limit to his own will, and it is the only reality to him. It is not that he wants at the outset to fight other wills, but that they simply do not exist for him. Like the artist he goes forth to the work of creation, gloriously alone. His attitude towards other recalcitrant wills is "they simply must." Let even a grown man be intoxicated, be in love, or subject to an intense excitement, the limitations of personality again fall away. Like the omnipotent child he is again a god, and to him all things are possible. Only when he is old and weary does he cease to command fate.

¹ The subject of collective hallucination as an element in magic has been fully worked out by MM. Hubert and Mauss. "Théorie générale de la Magie," in *L'Année Sociologique*, 1902—8, p. 140.

² Henri Bergson, *L'Évolution Créatrice*, p. 50.

³ K. Th. Preuss, *Archiv f. Religionswissenschaft*, 1906, p. 97.

⁴ Bergson, *L'Évolution Créatrice*, p. 205.

The Iroquois¹ of North America have a word, *orenda*, the meaning of which is easier to describe than to define, but it seems to express the very soul of magic. This *orenda* is your power to do things, your force, sometimes almost your personality. A man who hunts well has much and good *orenda*; the shy bird who escapes his snares has a fine *orenda*. The *orenda* of the rabbit controls the snow and fixes the depth to which it will fall. When a storm is brewing the magician is said to be making its *orenda*. When you yourself are in a rage, great is your *orenda*. The notes of birds are utterances of their *orenda*. When the maize is ripening, the Iroquois know it is the sun's heat that ripens it, but they know more; it is the cigala makes the sun to shine and he does it by chirping, by uttering his *orenda*. This *orenda* is sometimes very like the Greek *θυμός*, your bodily life, your vigour, your passion, your power, the virtue that is in you to feel and do. This notion of *orenda*, a sort of *pan-vitalism*, is more fluid than animism, and probably precedes it. It is the projection of man's inner experience, vague and unanalysed, into the outer world.

The *mana* of the Melanesians² is somewhat more specialised—all men do not possess *mana*—but substantially it is the same idea. *Mana* is not only a force, it is also an action, a quality, a state, at once a substantive, an adjective, and a verb. It is very closely neighboured by the idea of sanctity. Things that have *mana* are *tabu*. Like *orenda* it manifests itself in noises, but specially mysterious ones, it is *mana* that is rustling in the trees. *Mana* is highly contagious, it can pass from a holy stone to a man or even to his shadow if it cross the stone. "All Melanesian religion," Dr Codrington says, "consists in getting *mana* for oneself or getting it used for one's benefit³."

Specially instructive is a word in use among the Omaka⁴, *washin-dhedhe*, "directive energy, to send." This word means roughly what we should call telepathy, sending out your thought or will-power to influence another and affect his action. Here we seem to get light on what has always been a puzzle, the belief in magic exercised at a distance. For the savage will, distance is practically non-existent, his intense desire feels itself as non-spatial⁵.

¹ Hewitt, *American Anthropologist*, iv. 1. p. 82, 1902, N.S.

² Codrington, *The Melanesians*, pp. 118, 119, 192, Oxford, 1891.

³ Codrington, *The Melanesians*, p. 120, Oxford, 1891.

⁴ See Prof. Haddon, *Magic and Fetishism*, p. 60, London, 1906. Dr Vierkandt (*Globus*, July, 1907, p. 41) thinks that *Fernzauber* is a later development from *Nahzauber*.

⁵ This notion of *mana*, *orenda*, *washin-dhedhe* and the like lives on among civilised peoples in such words as the Vedic *brāhman* in the neuter, familiar to us in its masculine form *Brahman*. The neuter, *brāhman*, means magic power of a rite, a rite itself, formula, charm, also first principle, essence of the universe. It is own cousin to the Greek *δύναμις* and *φύσις*. See MM. Hubert et Mauss, "Théorie générale de la Magie," p. 117, in *L'Année Sociologique*, vii.

Through the examination of primitive ritual we have at last got at one tangible, substantial factor in religion, a real live experience, the sense, that is, of will, desire, power actually experienced in person by the individual, and by him projected, extended into the rest of the world.

At this stage it may fairly be asked, though the question cannot with any certainty be answered, "at what point in the evolution of man does this religious experience come in?"

So long as an organism reacts immediately to outside stimulus, with a certainty and conformity that is almost chemical, there is, it would seem, no place, no possibility for magical experience. But when the germ appears of an intellect that can foresee an end not immediately realised, or rather when a desire arises that we feel and recognise as not satisfied, then comes in the sense of will and the impulse magically to intensify that will. The animal it would seem is preserved by instinct from drawing into his horizon things which do not immediately subserve the conservation of his species. But the moment man's life-power began to make on the outside world demands not immediately and inevitably realised in action¹, then a door was opened to magic, and in the train of magic followed errors innumerable, but also religion, philosophy, science and art.

The world of *mana*, *orenda*, *brāhman* is a world of feeling, desiring, willing, acting. What element of thinking there may be in it is not yet differentiated out. But we have already seen that a supersensuous world of thought grew up very early in answer to other needs, a world of sense-illusions, shadows, dreams, souls, ghosts, ancestors, names, numbers, images, a world only wanting as it were the impulse of *mana* to live as a religion. Which of the two worlds, the world of thinking or the world of doing, developed first it is probably idle to inquire².

¹ I owe this observation to Dr K. Th. Preuss. He writes (*Archiv f. Relig.* 1906, p. 98), "Die Betonung des Willens in den Zauberaekten ist der richtige Kern. In der Tat muss der Mensch den Willen haben, sich selbst und seiner Umgebung besondere Fähigkeiten zuschreiben, und den Willen hat er, sobald sein Verstand ihn befähigt, eine über den Instinkt hinausgehende Fürsorge für sich zu zeigen. So lange ihn der Instinkt allein leitet, können Zauberhandlungen nicht entstehen." For more detailed analysis of the origin of magic, see Dr Preuss "Ursprung der Religion und Kunst," *Globus*, LXXXVI. and LXXXVII.

² If external stimuli leave on organisms a trace or record such as is known as an Engram, this physical basis of memory and hence of thought is almost coincident with reaction of the most elementary kind. See Mr Francis Darwin's Presidential Address to the British Association, Dublin, 1908, p. 8, and again Bergson places memory at the very root of conscious existence, see *L'Évolution Créatrice*, p. 18, *le fond même de notre existence consciente est mémoire, c'est à dire prolongation du passé dans le présent*, and again, *la durée mord dans le temps et y laisse l'empreint de son dent*, and again, *L'Évolution implique une continuation réelle du passé par le présent*.

It is more important to ask, Why do these two worlds join? Because, it would seem, *mana*, the egomaniac or megalomaniac element, cannot get satisfied with real things, and therefore goes eagerly out to a false world, the supersensuous other-world whose growth we have sketched. This junction of the two is fact, not fancy. Among all primitive peoples dead men, ghosts, spirits of all kinds, become the chosen vehicle of *mana*. Even to this day it is sometimes urged that religion, i.e. belief in the immortality of the soul, is true "because it satisfies the deepest craving of human nature." The two worlds, of *mana* and magic on the one hand, of ghosts and other-world on the other, combine so easily because they have the same laws, or rather the same comparative absence of law. As in the world of dreams and ghosts, so in the world of *mana*, space and time offer no obstacles; with magic all things are possible. In the one world what you imagine is real; in the other what you desire is *ipso facto* accomplished. Both worlds are egocentric, megalomaniac, filled to the full with unbridled human will and desire.

We are all of us born in sin, in that sin which is to science "the seventh and deadliest," anthropomorphism, we are egocentric, ego-projective. Hence necessarily we make our gods in our own image. Anthropomorphism is often spoken of in books on religion and mythology as if it were a last climax, a splendid final achievement in religious thought. First, we are told, we have the lifeless object as god (fetichism), then the plant or animal (phytomorphism, theriomorphism), and last God is incarnate in the human form divine. This way of putting things is misleading. Anthropomorphism lies at the very beginning of our consciousness. Man's first achievement in thought is to realise that there is anything at all not himself, any object to his subject. When he has achieved however dimly this distinction, still for long, for very long he can only think of those other things in terms of himself; plants and animals are people with ways of their own, stronger or weaker than himself but to all intents and purposes human.

Again the child helps us to understand our own primitive selves. To children animals are always people. You promise to take a child for a drive. The child comes up beaming with a furry bear in her arms. You say the bear cannot go. The child bursts into tears. You think it is because the child cannot endure to be separated from a toy. It is no such thing. It is the intolerable hurt done to the bear's human heart—a hurt not to be healed by any proffer of buns. He wanted to go, but he was a shy, proud bear, and he would not say so.

The relation of magic to religion has been much disputed. According to one school religion develops out of magic, according

to another, though they ultimately blend, they are at the outset diametrically opposed, magic being a sort of rudimentary and mistaken science¹, religion having to do from the outset with spirits.

But, setting controversy aside, at the present stage of our inquiry their relation becomes, I think, fairly clear. Magic is, if my² view be correct, the active element which informs a supersensuous world fashioned to meet other needs. This blend of theory and practice it is convenient to call religion. In practice the transition from magic to religion, from Spell to Prayer, has always been found easy. So long as *mana* remains impersonal you order it about; when it is personified and bulks to the shape of an overgrown man, you drop the imperative and cringe before it. *My will be done* is magic, *Thy Will be done* is the last word in religion. The moral discipline involved in the second is momentous, the intellectual advance not striking.

I have spoken of magical ritual as though it were the informing life-spirit without which religion was left as an empty shell. Yet the word ritual does not, as normally used, convey to our minds this notion of intense vitalism. Rather we associate ritual with something cut and dried, a matter of prescribed form and monotonous repetition. The association is correct; ritual tends to become less and less informed by the life-impulse, more and more externalised. Dr Beck³ in his brilliant monograph on *Imitation* has laid stress on the almost boundless influence of the imitation of one man by another in the evolution of civilisation. Imitation is one of the chief spurs to action. Imitation begets custom, custom begets sanctity. At first all custom is sacred. To the savage it is as much a religious duty to tattoo himself as to sacrifice to his gods. But certain customs naturally survive, because they are really useful; they actually have good effects, and so need no social sanction. Others are really useless; but man is too conservative and imitative to abandon them. These become ritual. Custom is cautious, but *la vie est aléatoire*⁴.

Dr Beck's remarks on ritual are I think profoundly true and

¹ This view held by Dr Fraser is fully set forth in his *Golden Bough* (2nd edit.), pp. 78—79, London, 1900. It is criticised by Mr R. B. Marett in *From Spell to Prayer*, Folk-Lore, xi. 1900, p. 132, also very fully by MM. Hubert and Mauss, "Théorie générale de la Magie," in *L'Année Sociologique*, vii. p. 1, with Mr Marett's view and with that of MM. Hubert and Mauss I am in substantial agreement.

² This view as explained on p. 508 is, I believe, my own most serious contribution to the subject. In thinking it out I was much helped by Prof. Gilbert Murray.

³ *Die Nachahmung und ihre Bedeutung für Psychologie und Völkerkunde*, Leipzig, 1904.

⁴ Bergson, *op. cit.* p. 143.

suggestive, but with this reservation—they are true of ritual only when uninformed by personal experience. The very elements in ritual on which Dr Beck lays such stress, imitation, repetition, uniformity and social collectivity, have been found by the experience of all time to have a twofold influence—they inhibit the intellect, they stimulate and suggest emotion, ecstasy, trance. The Church of Rome knows what she is about when she prescribes the telling of the rosary. Mystery-cults and sacraments, the lineal descendants of magic, all contain rites charged with suggestion, with symbols, with gestures, with half-understood formularies, with all the apparatus of appeal to emotion and will—the more unintelligible they are the better they serve their purpose of inhibiting thought. Thus ritual deadens the intellect and stimulates will, desire, emotion. “*Les opérations magiques...sont le résultat d’une science et d’une habitude qui exaltent la volonté humaine au-dessus de ses limites habituelles*”¹. It is this personal *experience*, this exaltation, this sense of immediate, non-intellectual revelation, of mystical oneness with all things, that again and again rehabilitates a ritual otherwise moribund.

To resume. The outcome of our examination of *origines* seems to be that religious phenomena result from two delusive processes—a delusion of the non-critical intellect, a delusion of the over-confident will. Is religion then entirely a delusion? I think not². Every dogma religion has hitherto produced is probably false, but for all that the religious or mystical spirit may be the only way of apprehending some things and these of enormous importance. It may also be that the contents of this mystical apprehension cannot be put into language without being falsified and misstated, that they have rather to be felt and lived than uttered and intellectually analysed, and thus do not properly fall under the category of true or false, in the sense in which these words are applied to propositions; yet they may be something for which “true” is our nearest existing word and are often, if not necessary at least highly advantageous to life. That is why man through a series of more or less grossly anthropomorphic mythologies and theologies with their concomitant rituals tries to restate them. Meantime we need not despair. Serious psychology is yet young and has only just joined hands with physiology. Religious students are still hampered by mediævalisms such as Body and Soul, and by the perhaps scarcely less

¹ Éliphas Lévi, *Dogme et Rituel de la haute Magic*, II. p. 82, Paris, 1861, and “A defence of Magic,” by Evelyn Underhill, *Fortnightly Review*, 1907.

² I am deeply conscious that what I say here is a merely personal opinion or sentiment, unsupported and perhaps unsupportable by reason, and very possibly quite worthless, but for fear of misunderstanding I prefer to state it.

mythological segregations of Intellect, Emotion, Will. But new facts¹ are accumulating, facts about the formation and flux of personality, and the relations between the conscious and the sub-conscious. Any moment some great imagination may leap out into the dark, touch the secret places of life, lay bare the cardinal mystery of the marriage of the spatial with the non-spatial. It is, I venture to think, towards the apprehension of such mysteries, not by reason only, but by man's whole personality, that the religious spirit in the course of its evolution through ancient magic and modern mysticism is ever blindly yet persistently moving.

Be this as it may, it is by thinking of religion in the light of evolution, not as a revelation given, not as a *réalité faite* but as a process, and it is so only, I think, that we attain to a spirit of real patience and tolerance. We have ourselves perhaps learnt laboriously something of the working of natural law, something of the limitations of our human will, and we have therefore renounced the practice of magic. Yet we are bidden by those in high places to pray "Sanctify this water to the mystical washing away of sin." Mystical in this connection spells magical, and we have no place for a god-magician: the prayer is to us unmeaning, irreverent. Or again, after much toil we have ceased, or hope we have ceased, to think anthropomorphically. Yet we are invited to offer formal thanks to God for a meal of flesh whose sanctity is the last survival of that sacrifice of bulls and goats he has renounced. Such a ritual confuses our intellect and fails to stir our emotion. But to others this ritual, magical or anthropomorphic as it is, is charged with emotional impulse, and others, a still larger number, think that they act by reason when really they are hypnotised by suggestion and tradition; their fathers did this or that and at all costs they must do it. It was good that primitive man in his youth should bear the yoke of conservative custom; from each man's neck that yoke will fall, when and because he has outgrown it. Science teaches us to await that moment with her own inward and abiding patience. Such a patience, such a gentleness we may well seek to practise in the spirit and in the memory of Darwin.

¹ See the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, London, *passim*, and especially Vols. VII.—XV. For a valuable collection of the phenomena of mysticism, see William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, Edinburgh, 1901—2.